



**Career preparation should be an
integral and intentional part
of a student's education.**

Career



The balance between teaching students “how to think” and equipping students to “get a job” has long been a source of tension on college campuses. Hoosiers cannot afford a focus on academic versus applied learning to be an either/or proposition.

Every student deserves the opportunity for a fulfilling career, and Indiana graduates expect that the credentials they earn will lead to meaningful employment and career advancement. But, just as the pathway to college success starts early in a child’s education, career exploration must be intentional from the beginning and career preparation should be integrated consistently across the education continuum.

In 2015, Indiana launched its inaugural *Career Ready* campaign as a call to action for educators and employers across the state to come together to ensure that Hoosier students have meaningful career experiences before graduating from high school and college. *Career Ready* is a visible example of a larger, ongoing effort to help Hoosiers at all levels know more about Indiana’s wide range

of career opportunities and in-demand jobs, the educational pathways that lead to employment, and the many workplace experiences—from job-shadowing to internships—that make them better prepared and more attractive to employers. This requires:

1. **Intentional career planning** that occurs early on, consistently and continuously—from K-12 through college completion.
2. **Integrated workplace experiences** in high school and college that help students apply their learning, connect with employers and develop marketable skills.
3. **Streamlined job placement** practices for all programs of study that smooth students’ transition from college to career and advanced education opportunities.

WHY IT MATTERS

A Student Perspective

When Salvador Espinoza’s college instructor saw the résumé he submitted for a career development assignment, she thought he lifted it from a website. It just seemed too complete and polished for an 18-year-old straight out of high school.

In the summer before his junior year of high school, Salvador had completed a six-week internship at Group Dekko, an Indiana-based manufacturing company. That led Salvador to more workplace experiences at Dekko over the next three years. Dekko’s interns gain experience in every division of the company, a process that matches students with the job roles best suited to their

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talents and helps them decide which education credential to earn after high school.

“As an employer, if you’re sitting around waiting for great people to come to you, it’s just not going to happen,” Theresa Peterson, Group Dekko Director of Human Resources, said. “We focus time and resources into building our own pool of potential employees. Investing in young people early on pays dividends long-term—in terms of employee expertise and loyalty.”

Today, Salvador is a freshman at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne studying business while working two days a week as a Group Dekko marketing intern. He’s already getting job offers from other companies, but he’s focused on finishing his degree—before starting full time at Dekko.

Today's Cracked Career Preparation Pipeline

Despite an increased emphasis on career readiness in recent years, for many students today career preparation is disjointed and inconsistent—if it happens at all.



Grades K-8

☐ “Career Day” or related experience?
LIKELY

☐ Ongoing career exploration?
MAYBE

☐ Career-themed instruction in core academic subjects?
UNLIKELY

High School

☐ College entrance exam?
LIKELY

☐ Career assessments inform graduation plan?
MAYBE

☐ Job shadowing, internships, etc.?
UNLIKELY

Entering College

☐ College placement exam?
LIKELY

☐ Career assessments inform degree plan?
MAYBE

☐ Simplified program selection through meta-majors?
UNLIKELY

During College

☐ Academic advising?
LIKELY

☐ Intentional career planning?
MAYBE

☐ Internship or related experience required for graduation?
UNLIKELY

End of College

☐ Résumé, job search help available?
LIKELY

☐ Ongoing surveys of alumni, employer satisfaction?
MAYBE

☐ Intentional on-campus recruiting and interviewing for all majors?
UNLIKELY

What's Possible: A More Purposeful Approach to Career Preparation

Hoosier students need intentional, consistent and continuous career preparation from K-12 through college completion.



Grades K-8

Students are systematically exposed to a full range of potential career opportunities through well-coordinated exploration activities that include regular visits by area employers, workplace tours, career interest inventories and classroom instruction that incorporates career-focused topics and concepts.

High School

Students graduate with a meaningful diploma that integrates career assessment results, structured career exploration and intentional course-taking aligned with an identified career goal and postsecondary education plan.

Entering College

Incoming students participate in a first-year seminar course that includes built-in career assessments and labor market data to guide program selection from a handful of broad meta-majors. Students narrow and refine their course of study and career-interest focus with ongoing in-person and online advising support.

During College

Undergraduate students complete a seamless blend of academic and applied learning experiences that reflect clear competencies and result in transcripted credit. Proactive interventions occur if students deviate from their degree map or miss key career development milestones.

End of College

Graduating students participate in structured bridge programming that includes professional coaching, marketable-skill training and on-campus interviewing aligned with their core competencies and program of study. Colleges' job-placement practices are informed by ongoing surveys of alumni and employers.

Ensuring Intentional Career Planning

There is a tendency to talk about “college and career” as if these are purely sequential steps: first go to college ... then think about a career.

Perhaps it's not surprising then that about half of college graduates say they would choose a different major or school if they could do it over again. The evidence suggests a range of benefits for students the earlier they identify a specific career goal or aspiration, including increased academic performance and persistence. In contrast, the cost of forgoing or even delaying intentional career planning is significant ... the added costs that result from multiple college major changes, the lost job opportunities and earning potential that come with extending time to degree, and the increased likelihood that a student leaves college with a collection of credits but no credential or career direction.

This problem is compounded for low-income and first-generation college students, who often have a narrow understanding of their career options. Without intentional exposure to the full range of possibilities, these students tend to have a limited career vocabulary that includes options like teacher and nurse but not related jobs like curriculum director and occupational therapist. It doesn't have to be this way. All K-12 students could

be systematically exposed to a full range of career possibilities through career-themed instruction and exploration. In later grades, students could begin to narrow their interests with the help of career assessments, intentional course-taking and job-shadowing. By the end of high school, students could have a more-informed sense of their career direction when making decisions about where to continue their education and what to study. In college, academic advising could be complemented from the start with purposeful career planning supported by ongoing career assessment, exposure to labor market data and meta-majors (broad groupings of related college majors) that simplify program selection and reduce dramatic major changes that prevent on-time completion.

Many of these practices already exist at some level in schools and on campuses today, of course. The real issue is not whether the tools or approaches exist, but whether they are employed consistently and systematically as part of an integrated system that facilitates student exploration and informed choice.

In recognition of these challenges and opportunities, the Commission will champion state policies and local practices that promote intentional career planning at all levels, including the following:

Promote Early Career Planning

1. Encourage school districts and teacher preparation programs to incorporate career-themed curriculum and instruction into core academic subjects.
2. Encourage high schools to organize graduation plans and course offerings around a few broad career interest areas that align with college meta-majors.

3. Build in career interest assessment “check-points” at key transition points during middle school, high school and college as an expectation for all students.
4. Include results from career interest assessments on students’ high school graduation plans and college degree maps. Encourage counselors and advisors to use this information to guide academic and career planning.

Align Academic & Career Advising

5. Identify critical career preparation milestones—in addition to academic course milestones—on college degree maps that trigger advising alerts and proactive student interventions when not completed.
6. Expose college students to current labor market and return on investment data during career planning and program selection processes.
7. Embed specific learning objectives for career exploration and career plan development into colleges’ first-year experience courses, student success programming and general education courses when appropriate.

Encourage Employer Engagement

8. Expand partnerships between local employers and K-12 schools to sponsor workplace tours, job-shadowing experiences, career professional interviews and related opportunities that broaden students’ horizons regarding the range of career possibilities.
9. Expand training and tools for school counselors and academic advisors that incorporate current labor market and Return on Investment (ROI) information to help students understand which college majors and credentials best connect to their career goals.
10. Promote partnerships wherein local employers make early commitments to hire students who earn an industry-aligned postsecondary credential within a designated time frame after high school graduation.
11. Incorporate career preparation indicators in annual state data reporting, including Indiana College Readiness Reports and Return on Investment Reports.



50%

of college graduates would choose a different college major or school if they could do it over again. (McKinsey & Co., 2013)

50%

of college students say they’re prepared for the workplace. (Harris Interactive, 2013)

Integrating Workplace Experience

Blending educational preparation with workplace experience must become the rule rather than the exception in Indiana.

An internship is the #1 college experience that leads to a job, university administrators noted in a recent national survey. And yet, too few college programs expect students to complete an internship or related experience as part of earning their degrees. While most colleges have tended to emphasize a broad education experience that “teaches students how to think,” employers increasingly expect graduates to arrive knowing the specific skills required to do a job, too.

Colleges should not be expected to convert their campuses to vocational schools, but employers cannot abdicate all responsibility for training their workers either. It is clear though that graduates must be able to apply what they know outside the classroom and students benefit from relevant workplace experiences that enrich their academic learning. Unfortunately, even when college students understand the importance of relevant work experience, many face a difficult choice: take the unpaid internship aligned with their program of study or take an unrelated paid job to make ends meet now.

Many Hoosiers simply cannot afford to choose the former option. In 2013, Indiana took a small step to address this disconnect by reforming the state’s EARN Indiana work-study program to expand opportunities for paid, résumé-building internships for economically disadvantaged Hoosiers with both public and private employers. These changes, coupled with a critical partnership with the Indiana Chamber of Commerce’s INTERNnet platform, have swelled participation rates by 25% for students and nearly 350% for employers in only two years.

To make meaningful workplace experience a reality for all students, colleges must expand industry partnerships and integrate workplace experience as a graduation requirement, as part of the core curriculum or both. Employers must do their part by investing time and resources in internship programs and becoming more engaged partners in helping educators create the employees they need to succeed.

In recognition of these challenges and opportunities, the Commission will champion state policies and local practices that expand quality work-based learning, including the following:

Integrated Work Experience

1. Integrate work-based learning experiences, including internships, cooperative education, service learning and community service opportunities in high school diplomas and college degree programs.
2. Support college faculty in integrating work-based, applied learning experiences and collaborations with employers within the general education core curriculum and across academic programs and majors, including the liberal arts.

3. Award college credit for approved internships and related work-based learning and ensure that these experiences are reflected on student transcripts.
4. Document and report work-based learning experiences completed by high school and college students as part of annual state data collections.
5. Encourage colleges to award career-competency certificates and industry certifications to students who complete intensive career experiences as a complement to their degree program.
6. Consider funding and/or public recognition for schools and campuses that increase the percentage of students completing meaningful work-based and applied learning experiences.
7. Promote innovative models that integrate work-based learning experiences without extending students' time to degree.

Increase Work-and-Learn Opportunities

8. Engage employers, including small and mid-size businesses, with training, toolkits and on-demand support for offering

quality internship programs and formalizing collaborative partnerships with area high schools and colleges.

9. Expand partnerships and blended learning opportunities between colleges and employers that provide internship opportunities that run concurrently throughout the academic calendar as well as during the summer.
10. Promote a standard statewide platform—i.e., Indiana INTERNnet—for colleges and businesses to post and publicize internship opportunities by program major.
11. Expand the state's EARN Indiana program and partnership with Indiana INTERNnet to create more opportunities for high school and college students to explore careers through paid, résumé-building internships.
12. Explore opportunities for colleges and employer-collectives to devote collaborative on-campus workspace and supervision for students to complete virtual internships with employers across the state or nation.

97% of CEOs and company executives believe colleges should expand opportunities for experiential learning.

(Harris Interactive, 2013)

More than 80% of employers want new hires to have completed an internship, but only 8% of students say interning in a field related to their major is something they spend a lot of time doing.

(Harris Interactive, 2013)

Only 29% of college graduates had an internship or job during college.

(Gallup-Purdue Index, 2013)

Streamlining Job Placement

The pressure for colleges to smooth their graduates' transition into the workforce has never been more intense than it is today.

Some students are fortunate to have an established professional network before they even enter college, whether through family and friends, adult mentors or other connections. Many more students graduate college without the contacts or networking skills needed to navigate a highly competitive job market.

In a modern world of online applications and sophisticated screening algorithms, these connections are more important than ever for recent graduates to stand out among an ocean of applications and land a face-to-face interview, let alone a job. Employers have long recognized the value of these connections. What employer wouldn't be more likely to interview and hire a candidate referred by a trusted contact than a stranger with equivalent qualifications?

Whether they realize it or not, recent college graduates do have established professional relationships with professors, advisors and other campus

leaders. When recruiting and career placement happen on college campuses, it is the college itself—not family connections or pure luck—that gives students a foot in the door. Ironically, college programs that require the least imagination on the part of employers to determine what a graduate can do—like business and engineering—often do the most to help their students secure a job while students in disciplines like the liberal arts are often on their own.

Fortunately, more colleges and employers alike are getting the message that job recruitment and placement must begin long before an applicant submits a résumé. A recent national survey of university administrators noted a more than 60 percent increase in campus discussions about job preparation for their graduates in just the past three years. The challenge now is to make sure these conversations result in more consistent job-hunting and placement support for students across all academic programs and majors.

In recognition of these challenges and opportunities, the Commission will champion state policies and local practices that encourage and streamline job placement, including the following:

Job Placement Support

1. Replicate effective career placement practices across academic programs, including business school models that connect students with employers before graduation.
2. Support the expansion of a common online platform to help Hoosier undergraduate and graduate students across all disciplines connect with employers statewide.
3. Encourage employers to sponsor students' postsecondary education through tuition support and part-time employment in exchange for working for the employer for a specified time period after graduation.

4. Facilitate public/private-partnerships that provide job placement bridge programs and employability “boot camps” for undergraduates, including professional coaching, marketable-skill training, networking and on-campus interviewing.
5. Explore the expansion of structured one-year fellowship programs that connect recent graduates with new and existing Indiana companies in a supporting role based on their program discipline and area of expertise.
6. Collect and publicly report job placement and employment metrics by college and area of study.
7. Consider a performance-funding incentive that rewards in-state job placement.
9. Incorporate industry-recognized short-term (less than 1 year) and long-term (1-2 years) certificates granted by Indiana’s two-year colleges in state’s performance funding formula and public reporting of completion and education attainment rates.
10. Encourage colleges to survey and publicly report, including as part of Indiana College Value Index, alumni satisfaction rates by campus on an ongoing basis and to use results to inform academic, career development and student support programming.
11. Encourage colleges to conduct systematic and ongoing surveys of employer satisfaction and to use this information to improve academic programming and job placement practices.

Consumer Demand & Satisfaction

8. Ensure regular state reporting of the most undersupplied high-skill and high-wage occupations to inform college program offerings, student outreach efforts and state policy.
12. Revisit approved academic programs systematically to ensure adequate completion rates, student demand, labor market outcomes and alignment with the institutional missions.



Only 29%

of graduates “strongly agree” that college prepared them well for life outside of college.
(Gallup-Purdue Index, 2014)

3X

The odds of being engaged at work increase nearly three times for alumni who feel their college prepared them well for life outside of it. (Gallup-Purdue Index, 2014)

**ABOUT
HALF**

(49%) of employed college graduates are not engaged at work, and 12% are actively disengaged.
(Gallup-Purdue Index, 2014)